

3.0 Affected Environment

This chapter provides information on the physical, biological, chemical, social, and infrastructure characteristics of the environment that could be affected by the proposed action and alternatives discussed in this EIS. This information is necessary to evaluate individual and interactive impacts that could result from the activities described in Chapter 2.0. Impacts are discussed in Chapter 4.0.

For the purposes of this EIS, the affected environment encompasses the Moab site, the three alternative off-site disposal locations (Klondike Flats, Crescent Junction, and White Mesa Mill), the transportation (rail and truck) and slurry pipeline corridors leading to the off-site disposal locations, and the borrow areas that may provide borrow materials for the proposed action. Where appropriate, a specific region of influence has been defined. The region of influence is the area that could be affected by activities associated with each alternative; this region varies depending upon the aspect being assessed. Section 3.1 describes the affected environment of the Moab site. Sections 3.2 through 3.4 describe the affected environment of the three alternative off-site disposal locations.

Although both the Klondike Flats and Crescent Junction sites are located north of the Moab site, some environmental, cultural, and social aspects at these alternative sites have important differences; these differences are discussed for each site. When resources and aspects are the same as or similar to those discussed under the Moab site description, the appropriate section under the Moab site is referenced when the resources are first discussed, or a brief summary of the resources is provided at the beginning of the section on alternative disposal sites.

The slurry pipeline route is discussed in the appropriate major section. For example, the pipeline route segments north of the Moab site are described in Section 3.2, Klondike Flats site, or Section 3.3, Crescent Junction site. The pipeline route segments south of the Moab site are discussed in Section 3.4, White Mesa Mill site.

Borrow areas are described in Section 3.5. Many borrow areas are within or near the boundary of a proposed disposal site; because of this proximity, either the general resources present at the borrow area are summarized, or a specific resource section is referenced. More detailed site-specific information could be researched and evaluated once specific borrow sources were selected.

3.1 Moab Site

The Moab millsite lies in eastern Utah in an area characterized by low precipitation, high summer temperatures, and moderate winter temperatures. Unique desert scenery in this area has attracted increasing numbers of tourists and new residents who like the moderate climate and variety of outdoor activities readily available. The focal point for the area is the city of Moab, which is about 3 miles southeast of the millsite on the opposite side of the Colorado River. Much of the surrounding area is open country administered by federal agencies, primarily BLM and NPS.